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EUROPEAN BRIEF [REDACTED] FOR THURSDAY, 14 MARCH 1991

[REDACTED] YUGOSLAVIA: ARMY PRESSING TO RESTORE ORDER [REDACTED]

YUGOSLAV PRESIDENT JOVIC AND THE MILITARY PROBABLY WILL FAIL AGAIN TODAY TO GET AUTHORITY FROM THE COLLECTIVE PRESIDENCY TO TAKE MILITARY ACTION AS THEY FIND IT NECESSARY TO COPE WITH THE COUNTRY'S CRISIS. [REDACTED]

AT THE LAST PRESIDENCY MEETING, ON TUESDAY, HARDLINERS FELL ONLY ONE VOTE SHORT ON MEASURES TO IMPOSE MARTIAL LAW AND MOBILIZE THE RESERVES; CROATIA, BOSNIA, AND MACEDONIA VOTED AGAINST THE MEASURES. THE MILITARY WAS ASKED TO PREPARE A NEW PROPOSAL TO BE CONSIDERED AT TODAY'S PRESIDENCY SESSION. [REDACTED] MEANWHILE, SERBIAN PRESIDENT MILOSEVIC YESTERDAY OFFERED TO REMOVE THE REPUBLIC INTERIOR MINISTER, ATTEMPTING TO DEFUSE DEMONSTRATIONS IN BELGRADE AGAINST HIS GOVERNMENT; SOME 50,000 WERE ON THE STREETS AGAIN YESTERDAY. SERBIAN NATIONALIST VUK DRASKOVIC AND OTHER OPPOSITION LEADERS ARE CALLING FOR THE MILOSEVIC GOVERNMENT TO STEP DOWN AND ARE WARNING BELGRADE NOT TO DECLARE MARTIAL LAW. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS APPARENTLY ARE STILL RELUCTANT TO MOUNT A CRACKDOWN WITHOUT CONSTITUTIONAL COVER FOR FEAR OF FRAGMENTING THE ETHNICALLY DIVIDED ARMED FORCES, BUT TODAY'S PRESIDENCY MEETING PROBABLY WILL NOT GIVE THEM SUCH A MANDATE. THE DEMONSTRATIONS IN BELGRADE HAVE DAMAGED THE POSITION OF THEIR ALLY, MILOSEVIC AND GIVEN THE PREVIOUSLY INEFFECTUAL OPPOSITION MOMENTUM. MILOSEVIC PROBABLY REALIZES HE OVERREACTED BADLY BY ATTACKING OPPOSITION DEMONSTRATORS LAST WEEKEND. [REDACTED]

YUGOSLAV LEADERS MAY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE THE COUNTRY'S TRANSFORMATION WITHOUT MAJOR VIOLENCE IF MILOSEVIC'S POWER CONTINUES TO SPIRAL DOWNWARD AND IF HARDLINERS FAIL TO BUILD A CONSENSUS IN THE COLLECTIVE PRESIDENCY. NEVERTHELESS, POLITICAL OR MILITARY HARDLINERS, FACED WITH AN EROSION OF THEIR POSITION, MAY STILL ENGINEER A CONFRONTATION TO JUSTIFY INTERVENTION. [REDACTED]

~~SECRET~~